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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION US-BOLIVIA US-CUBA US-INDIAN
NUCLEAR DEAL US-COLOMBIAN FTA 03/07/06

1. SUMMARY STATEMENT

Today's major international stories include Bolivian President Evo Morales accusing the USG of "blackmail" for withdrawing anti-terrorism funding for his country; India's new strategic role in the current geopolitical scenario; the recent expulsion of the Cuban delegation from Sheraton Maria Isabel Hotel in Mexico City; and the upcoming Regional Summit on Terrorist Funding Prevention at Argentine Central Bank in Buenos Aires.

2. OPINION PIECES AND KEY STORIES

- "According to Evo, (Bolivian) military will not be subject to Washington any longer"

Pablo Stefanoni, on special assignment in La Paz for left-of-center "Pagina 12," writes (03/07) "Bolivian President Evo Morales warned that the US will lose its past influence over the country's military policy. Also, the (Bolivian) government is deciding whether to nationalize companies.

"Strengthened by the national consensus that cleared the way for the Constituent Assembly and July 2 autonomy referendum, the Morales administration has toughened his stance vis--vis the US on military issues, and he is deciding whether to 'recover the corporations that have been privatized' during the golden years of neo-liberalism through the control of 51% of shares. New nationalistic winds are blowing in the economic and political fields."

- "Tension between Bolivia and the US - Morales denounces 'blackmail'"

Daily-of-record "La Nacion" reports (03/07) "Bolivian President Evo Morales accused the US of 'blackmail' for cutting its anti-terrorist financial aid for the country in a tough statement that is a turning point in the coca leader's moderate discourse...

"Visibly irritated, Morales attributed the US decision to cut its military financial aid to the (Bolivian) government's refusal to veto a Bolivian military commander in spite of Washington's request for this. However, USG sources told 'La Nacion' that financial aid cuts imply the USG's response to Bolivia's refusal to grant immunity to US troops at the International Criminal Court (ICC), which Washington has not

acknowledged."

- "Playground politics"

James Scout, columnist of liberal, English-language "Buenos Aires Herald," writes (03/07) "The 45-year cold war between the US and Cuba recently claimed a new casualty: the Sheraton Maria Isabel Hotel in Mexico City.

"US officials effectively killed a meeting there last month between 16 Cuban officials and Texan oil executives interested in drilling in the waters off the Caribbean island.

"Threatened with fines for violating the longstanding embargo, the hotel management promptly evicted the Cuban delegation, barring them from having any food or drink on the way out the door.

"Mexico fired back. President Vicente Fox called for an investigation into whether any discrimination laws had been broken while city officials sent in a team of building inspectors who ordered the hotel to close for code violations.

"In a political spat that seems better suited for a schoolyard playground than the world political stage, the Sheraton Hotel has become the latest incident to expose what some argue is the futility of the decades-old embargo, as well as deepen the growing rift between the US and many countries across Latin America."

- "Free trade resurrection?"

Daily-of-record "La Nacion" carries an opinion piece by columnist Andres Oppenheimer, who writes (03/07) "Surprisingly enough, the US-Colombian FTA that was announced last week and the probable signature of deals of the sort with Ecuador and Panama could mean that the US plans to create a hemispheric free trade area are not so 'dead' as they seemed some months ago.

"Four months after the disastrous Mar del Plata Summit, in which Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez captured the media attention by proclaiming that the US proposal to create the FTAA was going to be 'definitively buried,' the USG officers sustain that the free trade agenda is gaining new impetus.

"During a phone conversation, US Assistant Secretary Thomas Shannon told me that ever since the Mar del Plata Summit, the free trade plan 'is not only rising from its tomb, but it is on its feet and walking.

"According to Shannon, in addition to the US-Colombian free trade deal, Washington has already signed FTAs with countries accounting for two-thirds of the hemisphere's GDP, without taking into account the US economy."

13. EDITORIALS

- "US-Indian agreement"

Leading "Clarín" editorializes (03/07) "The agreements signed between the US and India (which were announced in the framework of US President George W. Bush's visit to New Delhi) reveal the strategic and moderating role the US assigns to India in the search for a new international balance, which includes the sensitive issue of nuclear power. It is a matter of political realism overriding non-proliferation international regimes.

"In fact, India is one of the four countries not endorsing the NPT and the recent US-Indian deal could

be setting a precedent of larger uncertainty about the enforcement of nuclear commitments. But the truth is that the current danger is a consequence of the arms race and the powers' nuclear development as well as of WMD spreading among belligerent regimes...

"India and Pakistan, whose dispute over Kashmir has been for years the main threat to international security precisely due to the possession of nuclear weapons, are now States deemed by the major powers to be reliable partners for containing serious conflicts and threats spreading in the region. India has an additional strategic value for the US - it is also a counterweight to China's power and influence in Asia. For the international community, this is more evidence of the limitations of the multilateral regimes built in the post-war period."

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